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**Subject:** Haines STIP comments

**From:** "J. Robert Venables" <rvenables@haines.ak.us>

**Date:** Fri, 30 Dec 2005 23:54:40 -0900

**To:** andy\_hughes@dot.state.ak.us

**CC:** Nancy\_Barnes@Legis.state.ak.us, fshields@haines.ak.us, "Rep. Bill Thomas"  
<Representative\_Bill\_Thomas@Legis.state.ak.us>

The Haines Borough would offer the following comments in response to the Department of Transportation's 2006-2008 STIP proposal.

There are two projects identified for the Haines Highway. The Lutak Road project, ferry terminal to town, was to have already been put out to bid by now. The new STIP proposal calls for delaying the project one more year. This road has been consistently rated as in poor condition. Its lack of roadway shoulders and other deficient features of the highway contributes to a public safety issue. This road has been the site of a recent fatal crash.

The second Haines Highway project is from MP 3.5 to 25.3 (project #68606). The Haines Highway is the economic lifeline between southeast Alaska and the rest of the state and will also be a key transportation corridor if the gas pipeline were to be built along the Alaska Highway. This project has disappeared from the proposed STIP even though substantial work is being done in the environmental evaluation and scoping phases. This project should be ready for design funds by 2007-2008 and should be listed in the STIP accordingly. The lack of proper design features on this road has also raised public safety concerns. This month there were two separate incidents where vehicle collisions on sub-standard curves resulted in passengers being medi-vac'ed to Anchorage and Seattle. Another accident last month was also unavoidable due to not having shoulders to avoid an out-of-control vehicle. That incident also required a medi-vac.

The Haines Borough has consistently and historically favored and supported marine transportation. This STIP proposal contains two important projects that the borough urges implementation of in the immediate future. The ferry terminal property itself has had catastrophic failures in the dock support cells and sheet pilings. Funding has been identified and appropriated but work has yet to begin. The Haines Borough urges that this project be initiated now and prefers restoration to the original design configuration.

There are funds also identified for a Haines-based shuttle vessel for the Haines-Skagway route. This economic and social link between these communities is vital to Haines, Skagway and the region as well as the AMHS. After many years of promoting the "Golden Circle" route with the dayboat, the transportation link has been all but severed. This has put economic and social stresses on all parties, including the State of Alaska. The Haines Borough asks that this vessel construction/acquisition be prioritized and the historic transportation ties reinstated between Haines and Skagway. We also support the construction of a stern-loading berth and look forward to working with the department as these shore-side facilities are constructed.

The recent storm in Haines has shown just how poor the conditions of the state-owned roads are and that work is needed now. The removal of these projects from proper implementation is a blow to not just the local economy but that of the region and state. The Haines Borough Assembly has unanimously passed a motion calling on DOT & PF to prioritize these projects in the 2006-2008 STIP for implementation.

The Borough appreciates the opportunity to comment on these important projects in the 2006-2008 STIP. I would be happy to discuss the reasons behind these recommendations at your convenience.

Sincerely,

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